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INSTINCT AND THE UNCONSCIOUS: A CONTRIBUTION TO A BIOLOGICAL THEORY OF THE PSYCHO-NEUROSES. By *W. H. R. Rivers*, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.
London: Cambridge University Press, 1920. Pp. viii, 252. Price, 16s. net.

Mr. H. G. Wells has recently given us in his *Outline of History* the story of the evolution of man as it can be pieced together from a study of prehistoric remains and of recorded events. Such an account can never be more than a second-hand description of what life has been. In addition we need to win a sympathetic understanding of the process by which the gradual development of human intelligence has been achieved. Dr. Rivers has in this work done us a real service, therefore, in providing a new method for approaching the study of mental development. His thesis is that the story of our mental evolution is to be traced in the organization of the human nervous system and that it is a story of progress from crude indiscriminating sensitivity coupled with excess of feeling and blind ungraduated reaction to greater and still greater delicacy of sense discrimination and an adequately proportioned measure of feeling and response. According to the English school of neurologists, the nervous system, in so far as function is concerned, is arranged in "levels," one above another, forming a hierarchy in which each level controls those below and is controlled by those above. When disease or injury brings about a loss of such control, we may therefore observe the behavior which is characteristic of an earlier stage of development. Every abnormality of behavior is consequently a clue to the method of our evolution. It is the special aim of the author to show that the more primitive reactions (accompanied by "hit or miss" effects) which are incompatible with those activities characteristic of a higher level of mental development usually become *suppressed* quite automatically, or to use the Freudian terminology, are thrust down into the *Unconscious*; and in Dr. Rivers' words it is his purport to consider "the general biological function of the process by which experience passes into the unconscious." This leads naturally to a study of the psycho-neuroses which are symptomatic of that particular form of suppression which the Freudians call *repression*.

The book itself is a masterly piece of work which no student of human nature can afford to ignore. Chapter IV, which contains an account of the experimental neurological work of Dr. Henry Head and his collaborators, upon which Dr. Rivers has based his thesis, is a model of lucidity and concise expression. Especially valuable are Dr. Rivers' attempts to define his terms which lead in nearly every chapter to a thorough examination of psychological first principles. There will be disagreement with many of Dr. Rivers' definitions and views, but none can fail to recognize that they represent clear thinking and precise knowledge. Many modern books depend for their success upon the brilliant marshaling of new illustrations to prove old points of importance; but here we have old illustrations aptly used to prove recognized new points of possibly even greater importance.

The book is essentially an original piece of thinking, destined to excite that useful kind of controversy in which new advance in science usually begins.

FRANK WATTS.